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## **Military History of Kane County, Illinois.**

Written by the late General John S. Wilcox.

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A fine military and loyal spirit has been manifested by the people of Kane County upon all proper occasions. Many of its first settlers were sons of Revolutionary sires, who vividly recalled the stories told by their parents of the toils and perils of that heroic struggle; and, under such inspiring impulses, the great anniversary of the Declaration of Independence has, from the very first settlement of the county, been ushered in as prophesied, "by the ringing of bells, the firing of guns and the glad shouts of a grateful people." Since the establishment of "Memorial Day," its tender and patriotic ceremonies have everywhere been observed along the broadest and most impressive lines. So complete cessation from the ordinary labors and business of life—so general abstinence from games and amusements—such ample and generous provisions for speakers, music, stands, seats and decoration—such wealth of wreaths and garlands of flowers—so general attendance of veterans and children, and such vast concourses of intelligent, appreciative people to join in all its sacred and beautiful services as characterize the annual celebration of this day, attest and demonstrate the patriotic devotion of the people of Kane County.

On the Sunday preceding Memorial Day, very many clergymen select for their discourses themes bearing upon the higher civic duties of life, and inciting love of liberty and also devotion to country. In many schools prizes are offered for the best essays treating of the lives and characters of great Americans; and these are read, and the prizes publicly awarded, as an interesting part of an afternoon program of patriotic school exercises. The school children proudly take a prominent part in honoring the surviving veterans and in decorating the graves of the sleeping heroes. Flag Day is most fit-

tingly observed by the schools generally. So the men and women of tomorrow are being taught the cost and value of liberty and native land, the horrors of war and the blessings of peace, and the high duty of living—and, if need be, of dying—for humanity and our country.

There were men, too, among the early settlers who had served in the War of 1812. The pioneers watched with keen interest the heroic struggle of the Texans in their effort to be free from the tyrannical despotism of Mexico. All were thrilled with intense indignation at the barbarous butchery of Tavis, Crockett, Bowie and all their comrades at San Antonio, and the shocking massacre of Goliad. And when, a few years later, our own disturbed relations with Mexico deepened to war, they did indeed "remember the Alamo," and with alacrity responded to the call of Governor French for volunteers, although the war was by no means wholly justified in the minds of the people. The ten-year-old frontier County of Kane organized a company of over ninety-five men, officered by Edward E. Harvey as Captain, and Lewis A. Norton, Hugh Fullerton and William G. Conklin as Lieutenants. It rendezvoused at St. Charles and was mustered into the United States service at Alton, August 3, 1847, as Company I, Sixth Regiment, Illinois Volunteer Infantry. Its principal service was in guard duty at Tampico on the coast, where the unaccustomed climate, filthy, unsanitary conditions, and the inexperience of new recruits, wrought their usual fatal results in the death by disease of Captain Harvey and thirty-four of the enlisted men. Moses' History of Illinois states that, upon the death of Captain Harvey, in March, 1848, Sewell W. Smith, whose name appears upon the company rolls as a private, was promoted to the captaincy. The regiment was mustered out at Alton in July, 1848. Lieutenant Conklin was again mustered into the military service of the United States as Battalion Major of the famous Eighth Illinois Cavalry, on September 18, 1861.

No words can adequately portray the varied and startled emotions of the people when the lurid war cloud of the great Rebellion rolled darkly up the Southern sky, and burst forth

in the thunders and lightnings of war above and around Fort Sumter. During the long debate over the question of African slavery, which was first focused in the Compromise Measure of 1820, there had been great diversity of political sentiment in Kane County, and many who loved the Union more than they hated the Southern system of African slavery, had done their utmost to allay the dangerous contention. But when treason culminated in open rebellion and assailed the sovereignty of the Nation, all differences were upon the instant fused in the hot fire of indignant loyalty. There was no hesitation. With one voice all declared, "the Federal Union, it must and shall be preserved." On Monday, April 15, 1861, Illinois' beloved President telegraphed Illinois' great war Governor, a call for six regiments of volunteer infantry for immediate three-months' military service. Kane County's response was two full companies, on their way to Springfield within one brief week. Sixty companies were called from the one hundred and two counties of the State, and this new county—the ninth in population—instantly furnished two of the sixty. The State Adjutant General's official report shows Captain Nicholas Greusel's Aurora Company as enrolled at Springfield on April 18th (Thursday), and Captain Edward S. Joslyn's Company as enrolled—the officers at Springfield and the enlisted men at Elgin—on April 22d (Monday). The facts were that the officers and enlisted men of both companies were actually, but informally, enrolled on each day of the intervening week as they consented to enlist, and at their home cities. The formal enrollment recorded by the Adjutant General was undoubtedly written out at Springfield with no regard for exact date or place of individual enlistment. Very few of the original enrollment papers have been preserved, and herein lies the utter impossibility of determining who first enlisted either in the county or in the State. To show the method usually adopted—although these agreements were of as many varying forms as the number of persons who individually prepared them—one which has been preserved is here given:

"We hereby enroll our names as members of a military

company at Elgin, Kane County, Illinois. Whenever the number necessary for a full company shall have been enrolled, officers shall be elected and a name and by-laws adopted, by a majority vote of the members; and by a like vote the company shall immediately determine what regiment or branch of the service they will enter, and forthwith tender themselves to the proper authorities for the war. And for the prompt performance of the duties of any station assigned us in said company, we solemnly pledge to each other our sacred word of honor."

The number of young men requisite for a full company had signed it. No date was given each signature, and precedence was only shown by the order of the signatures.

Captain Joslyn's Company had been under militia organization three or four years as the "Washington Continental Artillery," and had been drilled two seasons by the enthusiastic Colonel, Elmer E. Ellsworth, who was tragically killed at Alexandria, Virginia, early in the war. Its members began enlisting immediately upon knowledge of the President's call. Sergeant (afterward Captain) George F. Wheeler went before the Elgin city clerk and took oath of enlistment on the morning of April 16th, and has always strenuously insisted that he was the first man to enlist in the State of Illinois. Who can deny his patriotic claim?

The "hot" boys were hastily enlisting. The cooler ones were at once making preparation to do so a little later. The officers were writing and telegraphing for instructions and supplies, and all were in a turmoil of the wildest excitement. Little thought was given to the preservation of exact statistical data. The "Continental" had been attired in the showy uniform of Revolutionary times, which now must be changed to the inconspicuous gray of the United States army. We should not forget that the Confederates "appropriated" the color of our army uniform, as well as its arms, and many of its West Point officers, but none of its enlisted men. We were thus compelled to change our uniform to "the blue." As rapidly as its members or new recruits enlisted for the war they were measured by the local tailors. William G. Hub-

bard, George W. Renwick and John S. Wilcox borrowed money upon their note at O. Davidson's "Home Bank," and Joseph Hemmens hurried with it to Chicago and purchased the required gray cloth. Immediately upon its arrival every tailor began cutting from the measurements that had been taken, and every seamstress began sewing upon the new uniforms. Many an anxious mother, wife, sister and loving friend wrought far into the night, with prayers and tears amid the stitches. At the morning services on Sunday, April 21st, the pastors announced the abandonment of the usual afternoon meetings and asked the women to repair at once to places where the unfinished garments had been collected and assist in completing them. On Monday, the 22d the company of noble young men, fully clad in their new gray uniforms, were on their way to Springfield. It will be well for the young men of future years to make careful note of the significant fact that very nearly every member of that old militia company was honored with a commissioned officer's rank before the close of the great war upon which they were now entering. On Thursday, the 25th, both companies were mustered into the first regiment organized under the call—the Seventh Illinois Infantry Volunteers—the old "Continental" as Company "A" and the Aurora boys as Company "C." And so Kane County's two companies appear "on the right of the line"—Company "A" on the extreme right of Illinois' magnificent parade of 149 regiments of infantry, seventeen regiments of cavalry and two regiments of field artillery, besides the many unattached organizations and the great number of patriotic men and women of the State in voluntary hospital, sanitary and other service incident to the prosecution of this most stupendous war of ancient and modern times. Of this splendid array, Kane County organized within her borders, in separate and not permanent government camps, three regiments of infantry, two regiments of cavalry, three unattached companies of cavalry and one battery of light artillery. If another county in the proud State of Lincoln, Grant, Logan, Yates and Oglesby can equal this distinguished record, fair and patient search has failed to disclose it.

The commissioned officers from Kane County in these two companies were: Captain Nicholas Greusel, promoted to Major; Captains Edward S. Joslyn and Samuel E. Lawyer; Lieutenants Reuben H. Adams, James Davidson, Samuel E. Lawyer, Silas Miller and Rufus Pattison. Before their short term of service expired the members of these two companies were being placed in proper positions in more permanent organizations. The Seventh Regiment retained its autonomy in the three years' service with Nicholas Greusel promoted Lieutenant Colonel; William Brown, Jr., to Quartermaster; Samuel G. Ward, George F. Wheeler, Thomas McGuire and Samuel E. Lawyer as Captains; and Jonathan Kimball, Mason M. Marsh, Charles T. Elliott and John H. Hubbard as Lieutenants.

#### FOX RIVER REGIMENT—THIRTY-SIXTH ILLINOIS.

On August 14th Governor Yates, by General Order No. 139, promoted Nicholas Greusel, then Lieutenant Colonel of the Seventh Infantry, to the colonelcy of the "Fox River Regiment," and, only four days later, the first company of this new command marched into "Camp Hammond," on the line of the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroad, between Aurora and Montgomery—so named in honor of Colonel Hammond, the patriotic superintendent of the road.

#### EIGHTH CAVALRY.

On August 12th the Hon. John F. Farnsworth received from the Secretary of War authority to recruit and equip a regiment of twelve companies of cavalry, and very soon thereafter recruits began to arrive at the camp which he had established in the southeast quarter of the village of St. Charles. The largest formal muster of this regiment into the United States service occurred on the 18th day of September, 1861.

#### LINCOLN REGIMENT—FIFTY-SECOND ILLINOIS INFANTRY.

In the same month of August, 1861, Judge Isaac G. Wilson obtained from the Secretary of War permission to organize a third Kane County Regiment. This he christened the "Lincoln Regiment." Establishing its camp on the fair grounds at

Geneva, on the south side of State Street, just at the present city limits—named “Camp Lyon,” in honor of General Nathaniel Lyon, who had just fallen in action at Wilson Creek, Missouri—he began the work of organization. His official certificate is preserved, stating that Companies “I,” from Dundee, and “K,” from Elgin and Plato, were accepted for service by him on the 6th day of September. It is known that the company from Kaneville marched into camp the day before. In recognition of its first arrival in camp, it was given the position of honor on the right of the Regiment as Company “A,” and, for like reason, the companies above named being the next to arrive, became the “color” companies, “I” and “K.”

#### SERVICE.

The Thirty-sixth received its first real baptism of battle at Pea Ridge, Missouri, on the 6th and 8th of March, 1862, in which action it suffered a loss of six killed and thirty-two wounded. Its service was in the South and Southwest. It took to the field originally 965 men; received 221 recruits; and lost in killed, wounded and by the hardships incident to the service, about 700 men. It passed, by rail and boat and marches, over fully 10,000 miles. It served under different commanders and participated in ten battles, besides innumerable minor engagements and skirmishes.

The Eighth Cavalry served in the Army of the Potomac and its record was brilliant in the extreme. Its original strength was about 1,150 daring riders and its mount and equipment were the best. It received over 400 recruits to its ranks. Its achievements are an honorable part of the history of the Army of the Potomac. Its Colonel was promoted to the rank of Brigadier General and served with distinguished ability in the Congress of the Nation. It was claimed that John F. Farnsworth was the only member of the House that the audacious Ben F. Butler avoided challenging to debate. One of its Captains, Elon J. Farnsworth, was also promoted to the rank of Brigadier General, and was killed at Gettysburg.

## SEVENTEENTH CAVALRY.

On September 13, 1863, the War Department authorized General John F. Farnsworth to organize still another regiment of cavalry in Kane County; and on his recommendation the colonelcy of the new organization was tendered by Governor Yates to Major John L. Beveridge of the Eighth Cavalry. Colonel Beveridge at once established its camp of rendezvous at St. Charles, upon the grounds formerly occupied by the Eighth, and pushed enlistments with such vigor that eight companies were mustered into service on January 22, 1864, and four more—completing the regiment—on February 12th. Six hundred and fifty horses were procured, and on May 3d the regiment moved by rail, under orders to report to Major General Rosecrans at St. Louis, Missouri. It took about 1,100 men to the field. Its arduous service was principally rendered in the Department of Missouri under command of Generals Rosecrans, Grenville M. Dodge and John Pope. It was the last cavalry regiment organized in the State, and was not mustered out until February 6, 1866.

## LIST OF SOLDIERS

In the Civil War accredited to the townships of Kane County, Illinois, from reports of the State Adjutant General and from History of Kane County by the late General John H. Wilcox:

|                                           |      |                   |       |
|-------------------------------------------|------|-------------------|-------|
| Aurora .....                              | 1297 | Geneva .....      | 292   |
| Batavia .....                             | 288  | Hampshire .....   | 148   |
| Big Rock .....                            | 63   | Kaneville .....   | 124   |
| Blackberry .....                          | 162  | Plato .....       | 171   |
| Burlington .....                          | 72   | Rutland .....     | 39    |
| Campton .....                             | 46   | St. Charles ..... | 453   |
| Dundee .....                              | 249  | Sugar Grove ..... | 53    |
| Elgin .....                               | 1138 | Virgil .....      | 43    |
|                                           |      |                   | <hr/> |
|                                           |      |                   | 4638  |
| Officers .....                            |      |                   | 287   |
| Regulars .....                            |      |                   | 50    |
|                                           |      |                   | <hr/> |
| Grand Total .....                         |      |                   | 4975  |
| Population of Kane County in 1860—30,000. |      |                   |       |